# Wild swimmers protest United Utilities plan to lower Crummock Water by 1.35 metres



Dozens of wild swimmers converged at Lanthwaite beach to voice their opposition to proposals that threaten the integrity of Crummock Water, a cherished natural resource in the Lake District. Organised by the campaign group Friends of Crummock, the protest highlighted community concerns over United Utilities' plans to remove a century-old weir, which is set to lower the water's overall level by 1.35 metres. This initiative is part of the company’s broader effort to restore multiple water bodies in the region to their natural conditions after ceasing water abstraction in 2023.

United Utilities argues that removing the weir will enhance biodiversity and allow ecosystems to thrive by enabling rivers and streams to regain their historical channels. The proposed changes are framed within a commitment to environmental sustainability, emphasising collaboration with conservation organisations like the Environment Agency. However, opponents, including the Open Spaces Society—the UK's oldest conservation charity—argue that such alterations could lead to a diminished lake that lacks both its natural beauty and vital habitats.

Nicky Cockburn, a member of Friends of Crummock and an avid wild swimmer, articulated the emotional and psychological significance of Crummock Water for many. Speaking during the protest, she emphasised, "We want to see the weir re-naturalised through assisted recovery." Her personal journey with health challenges underscored the healing power of nature; she believes that the proposed changes could endanger the natural wildlife she treasures, including protected species such as Arctic Char, noting with concern that “species will adapt”—but there is a real fear they might simply vanish.

The protest, which gathered over 30 participants, was a culmination of heightened community sentiment, evidenced by more than 7,000 signatures on a petition opposing the water level reduction. James Lasher, a founding member of the group, noted, "The response today and so far has been incredible," referencing the collective effort that resulted in more than 275 letters of objection being sent to the Lake District National Park Authority.

Opponents of the plan argue that the weir is not merely a barrier but an integral part of the local landscape, sustaining the ecological balance. They advocate for alternative strategies that promote naturalisation without compromising the lake's current state. In contrast, United Utilities maintains that the planned alterations are essential for ecological recovery, insisting that the lakes have become resilient through the establishment of a new supply pipeline from Thirlmere in West Cumbria. This new infrastructure is intended to alleviate the need for abstraction from sources like Crummock Water, paving the way for the restoration projects to take place.

The current plans are still under consideration by the Lake District National Park Authority. The outcomes of this ongoing dialogue between the community and the water company will ultimately determine the fate of Crummock Water and its surrounding ecosystems. As protesters continue to rally for preservation, the situation encapsulates a broader tension between conservation efforts and infrastructure development—a theme that resonates far beyond the shores of this beloved lake.

As the review period unfolds, the interplay between ecological integrity, community heritage, and corporate responsibility will remain at the forefront of discussions regarding the future of Crummock Water.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraph 2, 3
3. Paragraph 2, 3
4. Paragraph 3
5. Paragraph 2
6. Paragraph 2
7. Paragraph 2

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://cumbriacrack.com/2025/05/11/dozens-of-wild-swimmers-protest-plans-to-alter-lake-districts-crummock-water/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.unitedutilities.com/Crummock/> - United Utilities outlines its long-term plans for Crummock Water, Chapelhouse Reservoir, and Overwater, aiming to return these water bodies to a more natural state after ceasing water abstraction in 2023. The plans involve removing infrastructure like weirs and dams, potentially lowering water levels by approximately 1.35 meters, to restore natural habitats and improve biodiversity. The company emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders, including the Environment Agency and Natural England, and has conducted community drop-in sessions to share proposals and gather feedback. The project is in the early stages, with work expected to begin in 2025/26, subject to planning permissions.
* <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/newsroom/latest-news/united-utilities-shares-more-information-on-future-plans-for-crummock-water-chapelhouse-reservoir-and-overwater/> - United Utilities provides additional details on its proposals for Crummock Water, Chapelhouse Reservoir, and Overwater, following public exhibitions. The plans include removing the weir structure at Crummock Water, ceasing water abstraction, and allowing rivers and streams to return to their historic natural channels. Similar decommissioning work is planned for Chapelhouse Reservoir and Overwater. The company is working with environmental stakeholders and has engaged specialist contractors to carry out surveys. The schemes aim to deliver environmental benefits, including the restoration of natural salmon habitats and the removal of barriers to fish migrations.
* <https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/faqs/decommissioning-work-united-utilities> - Friends of the Lake District discusses United Utilities' decommissioning work at Crummock Water, Overwater, and Chapelhouse Reservoir. The removal of concrete infrastructure is intended to return these water bodies to a more natural state, enhancing the landscape. This initiative is possible due to the new Thirlmere pipeline, which has become the main source of water for West Cumbria, allowing abstraction from these other water bodies to cease. The organization emphasizes the importance of environmental assessments and stakeholder engagement in the decommissioning process.
* <https://www.timesandstar.co.uk/news/22798070.say-future-crummock-water/> - Residents are invited to have their say on the future of Crummock Water as United Utilities plans to return it 'back to nature.' The company has built a new pipeline to provide West Cumbria with a more resilient water supply from Thirlmere. Once all customers are connected, United Utilities will stop taking water from Crummock Water, Chapelhouse Reservoir, and Overwater. The public is being asked for their views on plans to return these water bodies to a more natural state, with consultation events scheduled in October 2022.
* <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/newsroom/latest-news/crummock-consultation/> - United Utilities announces consultation events for residents to learn about future plans for Crummock Water, Chapelhouse Reservoir, and Overwater. The company has built a new pipeline to provide West Cumbria with a more resilient water supply from Thirlmere. Once all customers are connected, United Utilities will stop taking water from these sources. The public is invited to share their views on plans to return these water bodies to a more natural state, with drop-in events scheduled in October 2022.
* <https://keswickreminder.co.uk/2023/02/09/have-your-say-on-future-plans-for-crummock-water/> - United Utilities announces another series of consultation events for residents to learn about future plans for Crummock Water, Chapelhouse Reservoir, and Overwater. The company has been working with key stakeholders to develop long-term plans that maintain access for visitors while returning these water bodies to a more natural state. Once all customers in West Cumbria are supplied by the new pipeline from Thirlmere, United Utilities will stop abstraction for public water supply from these sources. The public is invited to share their views on these plans.